

IT'S IN THE HOUSE by SHAUN WILSON

It was 12:00AM. Stanley flipped his pillow, as it had become warm. Stanley can't seem to get any sleep. He knows it's only a matter of time before his cat attempts to enter his room. It was a large cat, with completely black eyes, void of any colour. The eyes were lifeless, and they always gave Stanley a feeling of uneasiness.

He stared up at the ceiling, in the complete darkness of his room. No matter where he looks, in his mind, he can see the dull and lifeless eyes of his cat staring back at him. He's always under the impression that the cat is plotting against him.

Stanley has a very large bedroom. Complete with a large wide bed with a small desk to its side, a nice red carpet, and a large closet. It's where he feels the most safe and comfortable. The problem for him is that he can't lock the door. Stanley rolled onto his side to check the table clock, and confirmed that it was indeed 12 in the morning. He was dreading to hear the sound of the cat scratching at his door. He doesn't know what it wants, he already filled the cat's bowl with food. The only thing keeping him company is the sound of the rocking pendulum of the longcase clock down the hallway.

Sometimes he can hear the sound of the cat roaming the house at night. It's the only time the cat ever comes out, it's always hiding during the day, and Stanley can never seem to find it. The sound of the cat's deep slow footsteps are audible, even on the carpets that cover the whole flooring of the house. Stanley is scared that the cat will attempt to hurt him, as he has no actual idea of what it wants from him.

Stanley finally sits up. He gets off his bed, walks over to the closet, and slides it open. Sitting on a box is a small red book. This book is a journal he started, cataloguing all the eerie interactions he's had with this cat of his. He picks up this book, and sits down at the small desk. He flips to an empty page, gets his ballpoint pen ready, and thinks for a moment about what to write down. He looks at the small calendar on the wall, then the table clock, and back at the empty lined page. He writes down the current date:

December 28, 1973.

Stanley looks around. He has a feeling of dread. He feels like the cat is onto him, and that it knows about the journal. He then writes down what's currently on his mind:

Tonight feels different. I haven't heard the sound of it roaming the house. I feel like it's planning something. It's never usually this quiet, and I'm more scared than ever just because of it.

He looked around again, making sure that he wasn't being watched. The feeling of paranoia was amplified because of how quiet it was. Stanley had a feeling that the cat was in the room with him, and it was only a matter of time before he heard the sound of it breathing behind him.

Stanley went back and laid down on his bed. He wrapped himself in his blanket, attempting to fall asleep. He could hear the sound of the wind and snow outside. He had a feeling of isolation, as the closest neighbour was half a mile away. The only sentient creature aware of his current predicament was the cat itself.

The silence was broken when the telephone on his desk began ringing. Stanley sat up and looked at it. He didn't want to answer, worried about what he'd hear on the other end. After looking at it for a while, just letting it ring, he walked over to his desk, picked the telephone's handset up off the hook, and immediately placed it back down, ending the call before it really even started.

Stanley looked around some more, not sure what to do. He's unable to get any sleep, and he's on high alert. Then he realised something—he was thirsty. His throat was dry, and he needed a glass of cold water. His mind began to panic, as this meant he'd have to leave the room. He looked at the closet, knowing that there was a Wiffle Ball bat in there. The thought for about a minute, wondering if he should bring it to protect himself. He ultimately decided not to. Stanley walked over to the bedroom door, and slowly opened it.

He slowly stepped out of his room, which was at the end of a narrow hallway. Stanley's plan was to get to the kitchen, fill up a glass of water, and head back to his room. He slowly walked down the narrow hallway, his eyes were focused on the opening at the very end. He felt his arm brush against the longcase clock, the sounds of its inner-workings fading away as he reached the end of the hallway. The blinds of a large window were pulled back, allowing a dim light to fill the living room that Stanley found himself in. The room had a large red couch, and a large wooden table in the centre. In the corner was a large pillow that was used as the cat's bed, and this bed was currently empty. As Stanley manoeuvred past the couch, he noticed that the large telephone on the wall didn't have its handset on properly, and it was hanging by its cord. He carefully placed the handset back on the telephone's hook, trying not to make any noise.

Stanley snuck to the kitchen, the dim light allowed him to find a wooden cupboard on the wall, containing rows of glass cups. He looked around a bit, and picked out one cup. He reached for the sink's handle, and began to slowly turn it. The cold water began to drip out slowly into the cup, the small sound of the dripping filled the kitchen.

Another sound also filled the kitchen—breathing, very faint breathing. Stanley was confused, he wasn't sure if what he was hearing was his own breathing, then he realised the breathing was

coming from a certain direction. It was coming from the living room. Stanley turned the sink's handle, the dripping sound coming to a stop. He then drank the small bit of water that was in the cup. He didn't bother putting it in the sink, he left it on the counter. He then knew it was time to get back to the bedroom. As Stanley made his way into the living room, he saw it. In the darkness of the room, Stanley could see the lifeless eyes of the cat. He almost screamed, instantly running down the narrow hallway, almost knocking over the longcase clock. He ran to his room, and slammed the door, his heart was now in his throat. Stanley slid open the closet door, retrieved the Wiffle Ball bat, and stood against the wall across from the door.

He could hear its footsteps on the carpet. They were getting louder, until they were right outside the door. His hands began shaking more and more, he was not prepared for this, not this early in the morning. Then the scratching began, the cat was sliding its claws down the door.

"Out of this house!" Stanley yelled, "Leave me alone! Be gone!"

The cat stayed there, it did not listen to Stanley's demands. It just sat there, scratching, scratching, scratching, and scratching.